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Cultural implications of Albert Bandura's socio-cognitive theory (on possible applications in intercultural studies)¹

Analyzing the issues concerning human development², it can be indicated that the indispensable conditions of the occurring changes (both in the sphere of mentality and of the relations with social surroundings) are: the person's active involvement in different activities of agentic, social and symbolic character (also communication activity), and personal interactions, so important in human life. This involvement is of particular interest for developmental theories, especially for those which aim at the description and explanation of the nature of changes in individual (and psycho-social) development, as well as they aim at explaining the mechanisms due to which the changes originate³. Thus, the subject's active involvement is a sig-

¹ First published in: T. Lewowicki, A. Szczurek-Boruta, E. Ogrodzka-Mazur (eds): *Teorie i modele badań międzykulturowych /Theories and Models of Intercultural Studies/*. Cieszyn–Warszawa 2006, Uniwersytet Śląski, Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna ZNP w Warszawie, pp. 42–49.

² As regards the concept of human development, two traditions of practicing developmental psychology can be referred to. The first goes back to the tradition of developmental psychology of children and youth, usually inspired by and associated with biological concepts of growth and physical maturity. Here, development is understood as the process of integrating directed changes, a sequence of progressive transformations which represent higher and higher level of functioning. In the second approach, development is treated in broader categories – as a process lasting in the whole dimension of individual life, in which the change taking place in time, activities, functions and mental processes, are important. This sense of development prevails in the present article. More: J. Trempała: *Modele rozwoju psychicznego. Czas i zmiana /Models of Mental Development. Time and Change/*. Bydgoszcz 2000, Wydawnictwo Uczelniane Akademii Bydgoskiej, pp. 15–16.

³ It is important here to apply a perspective of mechanistic, organismic and contextual theories of development which indicate the mechanisms co-creating and co-participating in the undergoing changes. More: A. Brzezińska: *Spoleczna psychologia rozwoju /Social Psychology of Development/*. Vol 3, Warszawa 2000, „Scholar”; J. Trempała: *Modele rozwoju psychicznego. Czas i zmiana /Models of Mental Development. Time and Change/*. op.cit.

nificant source and stimulant of proper intellectual development and a dimension which characterizes the “organism – environment” relations. In the psychological approach, the man is a dynamic system which develops under the influence of social contacts and many various developmental factors. Human behaviour is shaped concordantly with biology and it depends on the kind of past experiences which develop owing to interactions and the impact of social stimuli which affect the ability to react to the surrounding reality. Moreover, this gives inspiration for certain forms of subjective managing oneself and managing the outer world. One's own involvement and structural personality transformations resulting from it are characterized in many psychological concepts. Attention is drawn to the fact that the experiences collected by children in the course of their own involvement and subjective activities become the basic source of knowledge and the foundation for shaping the beliefs about the reality and oneself. They carry the feeling of authenticity of emotional experiences. It can also be noticed that culturally determined experiences (especially early multisensory experiences) function as significant prototypes in shaping perceptive processes which facilitate the development of the “I” identity. The development of the child's personality (of cognitive, emotional and social individuality) at first occurs only in contacts with significant people. In this field of interaction, the recognition of stimuli which co-create the basic context for the creation of “I” takes place. However, the more complex and interactive life environment is, the fuller the development seems to be.

Without any doubt, learning from Others through imitation and observation – called modelling – is an important condition of personality forming. Understanding the mechanisms of this process seems easier through the knowledge of one of the most influential concepts concerning personality development which stemmed from the theory of learning – Albert Bandura's socio-cognitive theory, otherwise called the theory of social learning. The central part in the process of personality development is occupied by learning from Others – modelling. That is why, referring to the author's clinical interests and his research, it can be noticed that personality disorders might be the results (side effects) of learning disorders. They originate from the individual's experience, or are the effects of applying inappropriate models. In the second case, as a result of learning emotional reactions through observation and substitute conditioning, man can shape inappropriate expectations, emotions, and behaviours. Certain direct experiences or applying wrong models may result in harmful self-esteem which leads to the lack of feeling of one's own efficiency. This example rises awareness of how important the mechanism of modelling is in the process of forming one's autodefinition (the concept of oneself).

According to A. Bandura, the individual learns a wide range of potential social behaviours. Their strength and duration depend on many commonly used reinforcements (punishment, reward, gratification, etc.) which modify behaviour. Among the indispensable elements of this process the following are distinguished: – observation of the model; – maintaining the model; – motor ability to repeat the activity; – motivation to repeat a particular behaviour. While analyzing these elements, it is worth indicating that the specificity of the stimulus (whether it is known, attractive or original) plays an important role in the process of modelling. That is why people probably learn such behaviours which they notice in case of significant people, authorities, also those who draw our attention through their extravagance in social behaviours. In order to save the behaviour model in memory, it is of crucial importance to understand its sense and intention which it conveys. Another issue is that we copy behaviours which are behaviourally available, which means that we learn such behaviours which we can perform and physically experience. A significant component of activity is the motivation to acquire cognitive behaviour patterns, so called procedural knowledge⁴. A higher tendency to repeat particular behaviours occurs when they have been reinforced. Thus, learning through observation comprises certain substitute conditioning. This means that in case of Others people learn mainly the behaviours which are observed as the reinforced ones. What seems important is achieving both the aim and social approval, constituting a kind of substitute reinforcement, which brings closer to the aim and is a strong stimulant (and reinforcement)⁵. In the process of modelling, the relation between the model and the observer is of special significance.

It is worth indicating that the child has particularly many models to follow. Children's social behaviours are learned from their parents, the models of the same sex, also from people considered by them to be influential (having strength and power), and from people who have the tendency to learn the behaviours rewarded by social environment. In the context of the distinguished models, a question arises: What does the repeated occurrence of behavioural patterns depend on and what stimulants decide about this?

⁴ P. K. Oleś: *Wprowadzenie do psychologii osobowości /An Introduction to the Psychology of Personality/*. Warszawa 2003, „Scholar”, p. 212.

⁵ A. Bandura: *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall 1986; The elements of the concept are discussed by A. Gałdowa. Cf. A. Gałdowa (ed.): *Klasyczne i współczesne koncepcje osobowości /Classical and Modern Concepts of Personality/*. Vol. 1, Kraków 1999, Wyd. UJ.

According to A. Bandura, the belief in one's own efficiency and the individual's evaluation of certain behaviour is an important factor which decides about the inclusion of this behaviour into the own cognitive and behavioural system. The belief in one's own efficiency means self-confidence, the belief in one's own abilities, a generalized opinion on the ability to act in changed conditions, in unpredictable or even stressful situations. This belief, which concerns various areas of activity, plays a key role in the individual's motivational processes; it corresponds with the readiness to act, with the readiness to overcome obstacles in learning the world, with endurance, cognitive-emotional efficiency, and also proper mental comfort. This belief, however, is also distinguished from the expectations of certain (positive or negative) results⁶. The individual's belief in their own efficiency is of crucial significance and contains its empirical and practical connotations as it decides about taking up activity and effort associated with it, about accompanying feelings, about the endurance in coping with difficulties, and also about the acceptable level of stress. The research confirms that this individual preference enhances the mobilization of the immunological system, whereas being aware of one's own efficiency increases motivation.

The influence of social models on the observer's behaviour may be considered in three categories, as a result of: – facilitation, – substitute inhibiting or strengthening reinforcement, or – learning through observation. The effect of facilitation can help to explain the imitation of simple behaviour forms which are not subjected to control or evaluation – simple everyday activities observed in Others' conduct. The individual might, in such situation, undertake imitative reactions under the influence of substitute reinforcement. Then, possible punishments and restrictions, which the model faces while performing the activity or later on, bring about the observer's reactions of restraining from the imitation of these new behaviour sequences. Cognitive representations of stimulating events become “mediators which steer the performance of imitative reactions”⁷. The author of the theory of social learning treats inner cognitive representations, created in the process of acquisition, as a simple reflection (simple copy) of outer events, regardless their character and type of sequencing. His attention is directed to the stimuli of the model situation, especially focusing on the relations between the model's behaviours and the reactions of the examined person. This theory does not explain the changes occurring with age; however, it enables better understand-

⁶ A. Bandura: *Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective*. “Annual Review of Psychology” 2001, pp. 1–26.

⁷ J. Trempała: *Modele rozwoju psychicznego. Czas i zmiana /Models of Mental Development. Time and Change/*. op.cit., p. 63.

ing of changes in human behaviour which take place due to collected experience. Thus, the theory identifies the reasons of changes in the individual's (observer's) behaviour with environment stimuli.

Shaping personality requires ongoing confrontation with the outer world – an interaction with broadly understood social environment, which with time becomes the field of independent, autonomic activity. This process develops also owing to releasing many mechanisms, among which defensive mechanisms (having the nature of adaptation)⁸ can be highlighted, as well as modelling mechanisms, also autoregulation ones – all those mechanisms which take part in the process of the individual's self-learning and the shaping of the schema of I and of the environment. Thus, this process is parallel to the direction of identity development⁹.

People coming from different cultures frequently experience problems with appropriate decoding other people's behaviours. They have difficulties in understanding and interpretation of certain emotional states, social behaviours and attitudes, which largely hinders their communication and even their participation in culture. Indicating aims and engaging in their achievement largely depend on the individual's proper motivation – such motivation which originates from the belief that the individual possesses or will acquire the abilities necessary for achieving the aims. High self-esteem and the belief in one's own efficiency are intrinsically connected with the evaluation of one's own abilities. Thus, it can be said that the image of oneself plays a significant role in determining the aims. It is also worth noticing that the image of oneself (the concept of I) decides which goals the individual indicates, what self-evaluation they carry out and how the progress models and modifies the individual's further behaviour. Indicating difficult aims may be treated as a stimulant of personal achievements of the individual. Self-confidence and the belief in successful fulfilling the aims allows to undertake difficult tasks,

⁸ M. Kofta, T. Szutrowa (eds): *Złudzenia, które pozwalają żyć. Szkice z psychologii społecznej / Illusions Which Allow to Live. Essays in Social Psychology/*. Warszawa 1991, PWN.

⁹ The issues of identity are considered by many disciplines. In expert literature, identity is viewed in many perspectives: traditional, evolutionary, and also phenomenologic and cognitive. The notion of identity functions apart from many terms and notions of close meaning, appropriate for different concepts of human essence and nature, personality and social functioning. Depending on the application of certain theoretical description, the individual (personal) identity can be referred to in the philosophical and psychological aspect, in the context of the occurring mental processes (also in the aspect of self-consciousness) concerning the concept of one's own (personal) I. What can also be referred to is the social (group or cultural) identity – viewed in the perspective of groups, social "entities", in which the man takes part and which in a special way shapes the individual's "personal being". Each choice of the term referring to the category of identity depends on a specific theoretical intention and methodological assumptions.

which increases the level of potential capabilities. According to the author, great significance of indicating the kind of aims can be attributed to the visualization of possible, potential identities¹⁰. These are important issues and their analysis indicates the mechanisms of learning and the behaviour regulations, which verify these mechanisms.

Referring to the sources, the fact can be indicated that the concept of I may be both learnt and constructed¹¹. The learnt factor is mainly exhibited in the internalization of attitudes and views coming from the environment (from the behaviours of parents, peers, teachers, authorities, or other social models). However, the constructed factor is associated with shaping new views as a result of numerous interactions with the broadly understood socio-cultural environment. The image of oneself may be recognized as a form of self-knowledge, which (apart from self-confidence and the belief in one's own abilities to manage in life) also consists of a peculiar way of thinking about the world. This decides about how the information is processed, what is felt and to what emotions it appeals. It is worth mentioning that the self-image itself, the cognitive schema of I, fulfills the informative function, as it provides knowledge about one's own potentialities of achievement. It also provides contexts for comparisons as in everyday situations one receives feedback information about oneself through the prism of one's goals and aspirations. Another important task is to integrate all indispensable information about oneself into one entity in order to experience oneself in the categories of continuity, permanence and uniqueness. This allows the individual to integrate particular dimensions of their social identity. This integration is a significant foundation of the feeling of identity which, being prone to numerous transformations, evolves in time.

The above mentioned mechanisms of social learning accompany the individual's everyday adaptation, learning about oneself, discovering the truth about oneself, one's behaviours and strategies used in confrontations with other people. An important area where the knowledge about the relations between modelling factors (social learning) and the regularities of individual development (personal "I") is the field of intercultural education.

¹⁰ Potential identities are an effect of joining and shifting the elements of existing identity. They are closely related to the image of oneself, as when we think who we could be, we rely on our self-knowledge. These identities are formed on the basis of the information about ourselves. These images are very realistic as they come into being due to personal knowledge and they motivate to changes. Sometimes they are based on conscious decisions indicating the individual's obligations. They are under strong influence of the rules and values accepted by the individual. More: R. E. Franken: *Psychologia motywacji /The Psychology of Motivation/*. Gdańsk 2005, GWP, p. 43.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 509; Cf. also: P. Oleś: *Wprowadzenie do psychologii osobowości /An Introduction to the Psychology of Personality/*. Warszawa 2003, „Scholar”.

Modelling process and intercultural education

In expert literature, intercultural education is understood in a very broad sense with full respect for the fundamental belief in merits of such communication¹² which enables social and cultural enrichment. This education is mainly associated with forming communicative alertness in the individual – the abilities to steer one's own emotions and behaviours. The foundation of such education consists in acquiring the ability to notice and understand human (especially cultural) differentiation, in extrovert openness to the world and its variety, and also in opening to new constitutive elements of personality and identity.

The activity undertaken by the individual and growing individual experience are the effects of the processes of interpersonal communication in socialization environment. The processes are characterized by certain specificity of stimulation and individual results of reacting to it in different life periods of the individual. Experiencing the world, which develops the perspective of individual experiences, is thus a bridge between human activity in the environment and the changes which occur in the mentality and social behaviours of the man. This leads to re-interpretation of the concept of "I" and reconstruction of identity.

The learning process, which constitutes the basis for conditioning and modelling (social learning) theories, is associated with the mechanism of attention. It involves three interrelated processes: – attention orienting, – attention selectivity (dependent on individual attitudes), and – ability to process information. In this context, the energy of actions, their direction, durability and effectiveness, depend on the information acquired from the environment¹³ and on the individual's system of emotional reacting to it. With time and collected social experience, individuals start to be guided not only by their own but also social expectations. They also acquire the ability to monitor their individual attitudes and affective states, both egocentric (focusing only on oneself) and prosocial ones. This issue seems to be of special significance for the theoretical analysis of social and communicative behaviours towards Others and in the training of intercultural education. What is especially important in this area of social influence is: – the positive emotional attitude to unlikeness, – the ability to process the acquired knowledge and ideas

¹² More: *Komunikacja międzykulturowa jako fenomen kultury współczesnej /Intercultural communication as a phenomenon of modern culture/*. [in:] A. Kapciak, L. Korporowicz, A. Tyszka (eds): *Komunikacja międzykulturowa. Zbliżenia i impresje /Intercultural Communication. Insights and Impressions/*. Warszawa 1995, Instytut Kultury; J. Mikułowski Pomorski: *Komunikacja międzykulturowa. Wprowadzenie /Intercultural Communication. An Introduction/*. Kraków 1999, Wyd. AE.

¹³ R. E. Franken: *Psychologia motywacji /Psychology of Motivation/*. op.cit., p. 37.

about Others and combining them with the predisposition to creative reacting, and – the skill of being transgressive¹⁴. The last quality means the readiness for transgressing one's own cognitive, emotional and behavioural borders concerning Others. It is a very important component not only in situation and task conditions, but also (and mostly) in daily relations with social surroundings. It enables creative modifications in the process of social learning, in which selective approach to reactions and behaviours copied from the model determines effectiveness.

In quest for possibilities of placing the major assumptions of the theory of social learning in the foundations of intercultural education, it seems useful to refer to the role of the environments which shape the individual's sensitivity to the surrounding world, provide models of social behaviours, and model the ways of agentic managing of comprehension and interpretation of stimuli and their copying. All these activities can be regarded as significant factors shaping and enhancing the development of personality.

Mechanisms of social learning through modelling may be used in the organization of the process of cultural sensitizing, in which learning the culture, cherishing cultural heritage, and shaping tolerant and open attitudes to Others should take place in the conditions of active learning through observation.

This is a serious task for parents and teachers to become models (worth imitating) themselves, to experience motivation, and to feel the emotional and behavioural need of exposing the behaviours which approve of unlikeness. It is important to shape (in the child's consciousness) the need and capability of positive valuing, the need for familiarizing with the Other, preparing programmes and projects which shape the sensitivity to alien cultures, nationalities, religions, and, most of all, to other people. What is of real importance for school is that it should react to such contemporary challenges and the young should naturally deepen their knowledge of Others and initiate contacts with them in the area of behaviours that are available and possible to experience. Intercultural education aims at going beyond what may limit the individual in thinking and acting. It aims at visiting the border areas and the space of Others in order to accept and recognize Them and to experience satisfaction and fulfillment because of this. The category of the Other helps in numerous comparisons which we make to ourselves and it

¹⁴ J. Koziński: *Transgresja i kultura /Transgression and Culture/*. Warszawa 1997, „Żak”; J. Koziński: *Psychotransgresjonizm: nowy kierunek w psychologii /Psycho-transgressionism: a New Current in Psychology/*. Warszawa 2001, „Żak”; J. Koziński: *Koncepcje psychologiczne człowieka /Psychological Concepts of Man/*. Warszawa 1998, „Żak”; J. Koziński: *Koncepcja transgresyjna człowieka: analiza psychologiczna /The Transgressive Concept of Man: a Psychological Analysis/*. Warszawa 1987, PWN.

helps to describe one's own unique identity. Our attitude to (functional, social, cultural) unlikeness depends on many factors, among which the following seem most important: personal preferences, emotional and social experiences, prepared cognitive schemata, the system of personal meanings and preferred values, and also socio-cultural conditions, in which individuals develop and in which they learn copying, imitating and selective internalizing of social behaviours. That is why, social models of significant people are of such importance – they become an authentic source of knowledge and experience resulting from interaction, they provide stimuli which are important forms of reinforcement in social relations and behaviours, regardless the age and qualitatively different individual categories.